THE LIFE OF KUKKURIPA | LEVEKUNST art of life

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At another moment, near the bodhi tree in Bodhgaya, Gesar sees the great sage Megashri. The sage sings wordlessly and displays to Gesar incalculable, uncountable, immeasurable, inconceivable incomprehensible, inestimable numbers of Buddhas. He shows Gesar as many Buddhas as atoms in the land masses of all the continents and Pure Land of the univeses. Gesar sees Buddhas in innumerable fixed and changing forms, all radiating light in networks of rays of many colors, pervading all conceivable world systems, uniting them in a vast total pattern which is beyond

conception or comprehension or truth or falsehood. The great sage shows Gesar the infinity of intersecting nets that are the inseparable nature of light and awareness. The great sage conveys to Gesar, King of Ling, the Peerless Warrior the words that follow.

THE BLAZING MIRROR OF ABSOLUTE COMPASSION:
INVOKING THE SUPREME MAHASIDDHA KUKKURIPA,
THE CO-EMERGENT KING OF ILLUSION.

In the taste of sukra,
Thought spontaneously returns to non-thought.

Known directly in the gate of passion
Which no concept can penetrate,
Inseparable light and life force,
Pulse with primordial Great Bliss.

The stainless expanse of boundless compassion,
Radiant with the four joys,

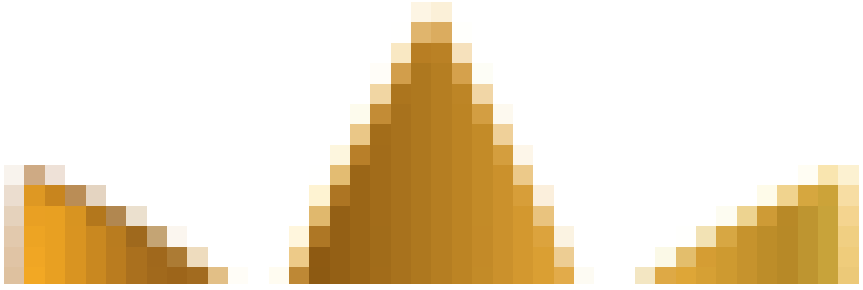
Ceaselessly emanates and gathers without motive or direction.
Beyond all worlds, it offers and receives the world.

Homage to this, the self-born mind of Kukkuripa
Who, hearing the cries of illusory worlds
Moves through the empty realms of form.
Everywhere.

Though called Kukkuripa
Born from the unchanging bindu,
His family name cannot be known.
Though known as Shantibhadra,
His birth name cannot be remembered.

He appeared suddenly in the eastern part of Bengal.
He appeared later as monk and pandita at glorious Nalanda
Where he mastered the twelve branches of scripture of the two vehicles.

But hearing the echo of Maitreya's whisper on an evening breeze,
He moved to seek the luminous great expanse
Pulsing in the symbolic forms free from habitual tendencies.
He moved to a forest cave near Lumbini
To practice in uninterrupted solitude.



For twelve years, one pointedly,
Free from acceptance and rejection,

Kukkuripa practiced in this way:

The radiance which arises at the moment of death
Is the luminosity of Dharmakaya.
Seeing everything in sensory reality as unelaborated
Dharmakaya
Brings this inner radiance to the path.

To purify all habitual tendencies of the illusory body,
And bring them to the path,
The essence of all meditation is the Great Compassion.

By meditating on the seed syllables, Buddhas and Buddha fields
The circumstances of being born into a particular place and body
Are completely purified.

Thus all the physical world is the pure body of enlightenment;
Hearing all sound is the pure speech of enlightenment;
Experiencing all the movements of mind is the pure mind of enlightenment.

So by one pointed meditation
On the stainless empty nature of phenomena
And Lokeshvara's all-pervasive love,
Kukkuripa was firmly established in utpattikrama
And achieved the worldly siddhis:
Swift movement, penetration of matter, clairvoyance,
Flying, invisibility, immortality, complete health, and the rest.

In this way, he lived alone deep within the forest,
Eating fruit and nuts, and wild yams,

Drinking water from a nearby stream.

One day a small black dog,
A female puppy, starving and lice-ridden,
Ventured into his cave.
For three days, lovingly he fed and nursed the dog.

But then Kukkuripa heard the voice of Indra
And rose up far above the cloudy summit of Mt. Meru,
To the Place of Auspicious Vision,
The realm of the thirty-three gods of the desire realm,
And the secret dwelling of the Yaksas.

In the shining center of this realm,
Encircled by a hundred jeweled turrets

And encompassed by a golden wall,
Stands Indra's court, the Victorious Abode.
Sixteen thousand jewel columns form the terraces of the palace
And support its golden roofs.
Five hundred gods guard its four gates in each of the four directions.

Below the ground is soft as silk but made of gold
And sprinkled with jewels of a hundred and one hues.
In each direction stands a park outside the city walls,
And fragrant gardens border each of these parks.

Everywhere are magical elephants, horses, thousands of attendants.

Yaksa vajra-holders dwell in the four mounds
At the four corners of Mt. Meru's summit.

Beyond the parks to the northeast stands the All Gathering Tree,
The source of fulfillment of all wishes.
Beneath it lies a square white stone slab, glowing like moon light.
In the southeast is the great crystal vase of amrita,
Protecting the gods from sickness, aging and sudden death.

The air is filled with the endless reverberation of a drumbeat
Echoing the truths of impermanence, suffering, emptiness,
Pulsing with the thought of nirvana as eternal peace.

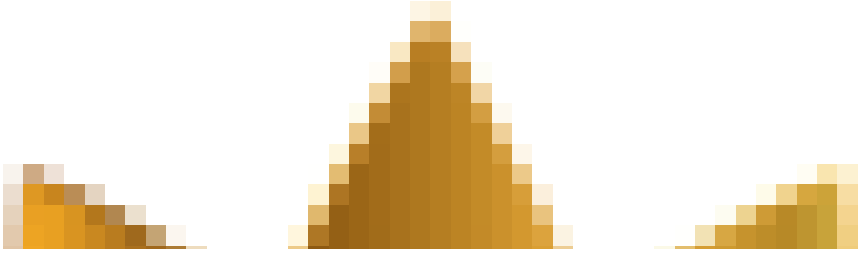
Southwest of the court is the circular gathering place
Where the gods hear the excellent law.

In its center is a great golden throne.
Here Indra sits as he teaches the gods seated around him.

Around glorious Indra, radiant as the noon-day sun,
Sit the thirty-two: eight are the gods of wealth,
Then the Asvin twins, lords of fertility and harvest,
The eleven wrathful protectors, and the twelve lesser suns.

All these deities appear in this realm in their own form
And, simultaneously, as the places and qualities of that realm.

This is the expanse of the phenomena created by desire.



Measureless in its array of subtle harmonies and insights,
Utterly absorbing all restless dissatisfactions of mind,

In this glittering realm of infinite delicacy,
Only a hair's breadth of difference separates outer and inner worlds.
So overwhelmed by waves of pleasure and gratitude
Kukkuripa lingered there for what seemed many years.
Yet one day, he thought of the small dog, left starving in his cave.
He called out to the gods:
"Let us all descend now to the land of Jambudvipa."

And when they asked why, he told them of the dog
Which must even now be dying without water and food.

"Ah, " they replied, "Even though you have practiced for so long,
You are still attached to the idea of a dog."

And persuaded by this argument, Kukkuripa remained for 12 more years.

But the thought of the dog's suffering of thirst and starvation,
Its pains and terror in dying,
The rotting of its body, its bones turned to dust
Would not be dispelled.

Then, in the company of all the gods,
Kukkuripa sang this song:

"Because emptiness is experienced as void;
Because life is experienced as the limit of a self;
Because light is experienced as knowing;
Because compassion is experienced as an action;

Because perceptions are experienced as attributes;
Because bliss is experienced as pleasure;
You great gods and your domain are conditional and illusory,
And you must cling to limits imposed by desire, sensation and mind.

“But know, my friends, that the infinite delights here
Are equaled by the intensity of terror and regret
That you will find when your beautiful bodies suddenly begin to age
And your sublime domain dissolves
In the smoke of the charnel ground and smell of rotting flesh.

“While you still can, realize that you and your realm
Have risen as a spontaneous gift of primordial Great Compassion

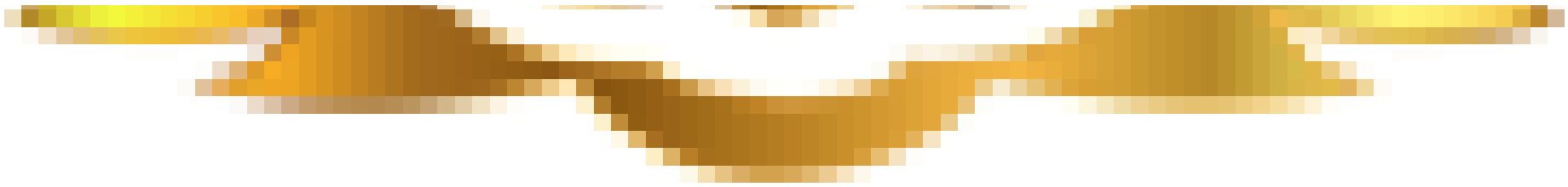
From the radiance of Buddha Amitaeus, Lord of Boundless Life,
As a shadow of his deathless pure realm
Seen dimly through the screen of your desires.

“Now by opening your hearts and thoughts to the flow
Of Great Compassion, which is the free breath of endless life,
The senses themselves become the self-existing gateways
To unconditioned life, all-pervasive light, and compassion
Free from the chains of desire and fear.”

Fear froze the minds of all the gods,
And with longing they listened.

Kukkuripa then showed the Buddha’s way
Of entering the Pure Realm Of Amitaeus,

Self-Born Lord of Boundless Life
To all the gods, Yaksas and other deities.



Pointing to the sun, to water, to earth, and so forth,
He showed them in this way:

“Gazing at the sun, brilliant, nurturing, and all-pervasive
As it hangs in the Eastern sky like a suspended drum,
Let the continuity of radiant light remain clear and unchanging
Whether one’s eyes are open or closed.

“Gazing on clear pure water, let it fill your mind.
As it becomes ice, shining and transparent.
It becomes a deep blue ground of lapis lazuli,
Shining from within and without,

Lit by the vast sparkling jeweled cloth of gold beneath it.
This water, radiant, insubstantial and ever moving
Is the ground of all qualities and aspirations.

“From the substantial and enduring qualities of earth,
An immeasurable expanse of jeweled palaces arise,
Adorned with garlands of pearls, diamonds, rubies, and liquid gold,
Surrounded by rows of trees with jewel leaves
From whose branches hang sweet ripe fruit.
From this earth comes the solid form of all qualities and aspiration.

“From the ever moving quality of air
Arise vivacious perfumes and subtle promptings.

All sounds become melodious .
From this air comes the movement of aspiration.

“Free from illusory longings or fixed desires,
The elements, from their own nature,
Are joined in perfect permanent accord.
This glimpse of Amitaeus’ Pure Realm
Purifies eons of evil deeds and habitual perceptions.

“Here in the light of the jeweled leaves of each tree,
An infinite number of Buddhas like fine dew
Radiate light into an infinity of pure and impure realms.
All the waters, palaces, and so forth
Also sparkle with the blazing of countless hosts of Buddhas
Filling the whole of space.

“In the center, like the sun at the center of all light rays in the world,
The Buddha Amitaeus, radiant like molten gold,
Sits on his blazing lotus throne.
The Tathagata’s body is the body of the Dharmadhatu,
And inseparable from the 8 consciousnesses,
The qualities of your own mind, innate and radiant.

“At that moment, all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas
Send out streams of golden light bathing all of phenomena.
Then one hears the path of liberation spontaneously
Echoing in streams of water, breezes, the stirring of leaves,
Bird songs and flickers of light.

“You are completely inseparable
From Buddha Amitaeus, boundless life itself;
From Buddha Amitabha, who is infinite light;
And from Avalokiteshvara, the embodiment of compassion
Unlimited by ordinary concepts of space, time, or difference.

“Now, or later when the karma which has bound the elements
In this realm and being dissolves,
Rely on this.

“As subtle movements of air in air,
All dualistic struggles are dissolved in boundless life.
As sunlight colored in shifting clouds,
All delusory passions are dissolved in boundless light.
As mind taking shape in myriad illusory phenomena,

All suffering and fear of suffering are dissolved in limitless compassion.
You are no longer restricted by the limits of being, time, or realm.

“So, be it in one place or many; be it all at one time or in many times.
Wherever there is imprisonment in pain and confusion,
You will appear there to liberate beings from suffering.

“Be it in one place or many, be it all at one time or in many times,
Wherever the Tathagata appears,
You will appear to hear and praise that one.

“Because the Tathagata is the heart of all life,
These two activities are identical.”

Thus dissolving all absorption in the realm of the thirty-three gods,
Kukkuripa re-entered the human realm.

When the Acarya had returned to his forest cave,
The dog he had left behind ran up to him.
She had neither starved nor aged.
It seemed as if he had been gone for no more than a day,
And might have seemed no more than an instant,
Except that in his absence,
The puppy had dug out a pit in the rear of the cave,
And there a spring of crystal water rose.

Seeing it, Kukkuripa heard in the bubbling water's play
The clear voice of Nagarjuna himself:

"Water lying deep within the earth
Rises immaculate and pure,
Like pure wisdom which seemed lost and locked
In the obscurations of this world."

Then Kukkuripa picked up the black she-dog,
Held it in his lap and caressed it,
And he did so, the dog became the yogini
Radiant in the full bloom of youth,
Splendid with all the major and minor marks.

Then Vajrayogini, in a voice
With the sound of an approaching summer thunder-storm,
Called to the Acarya:

“In the deathless pulse of limitless compassion,
Radiant, all-penetrating, unfixed,
There is no obstacle or antidote.
The relative and absolute,
The momentary and the timeless do not separate.

“In the unfabricated samadhi, there is no attainment.
So it is said:
‘Supremely unchanging great passion is primordial awareness.’

“Light and life force joined
In the gate of passion
As temporary conventional bliss
Is inseparable from bliss beyond concept.

“Expanding and gathering
This bliss is the direct expression of limitless compassion.”

Then in a haunting and melodious soft voice,
Like the sound of a bird leaving the nest,
The Yogini sang to him:

“You have emptied the god realm, O son of Noble Family.
You have done well to return here.

“The pure and free expanse of sunyata
Is not reached by the contrived path of rejecting the world.
The changeless radiance of Great Compassion
Is not reached by the fabricated path of clinging to good qualities.

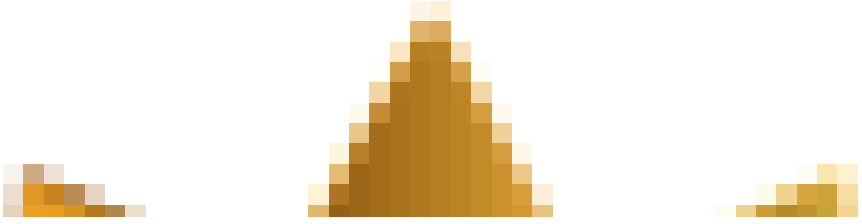
“Here, now this very place is
The living reality of compassion.

“Here the six realms and the trikaya
Are simultaneous.
This can only be seen in the light
Of all-inclusive Great Compassion,
Which is the Great Bliss.

“This world, exactly as it is,
The body, speech and mind of all the Buddhas,
Here, now and always reaches out to you.

“Now, in this very instant, here on this very spot,
The Dakini opens the unfabricated treasury of the innate,
The stainless great bliss, ever undispersed.

“Thus, from the universal heart of ceaseless compassion itself
Known only by direct experience
In the treasure-house of phenomenal existence,
The Four Abhishekas spontaneously arise.



Kukkuripa and the Yogini were henceforth inseparable.
This is the uncontrived samaya,

The primordial ground,
The unmistaken path,
The fruition which needs no confirmation
Even by experience itself.

This is the unimpeded living expression
Of space in union with space.

Free from intention or effort,
Samatha, natural motionless non-thought;
Vipassana, natural movement devoid of attachment;
Inseparable: this is the authentic Mahavipassana
Of ceaseless Great Compassion.

Should even the notion of an obscuration arise,
Should even subtle duality appear momentarily real,
Let it melt in that motiveless embrace
Which is Buddha-nature itself.

Receive the unfathomable offerings
Of shimmering senses and torrential passions
Arising from the primordial union of bliss and emptiness
As the spontaneous ganachakra

Consumed by joy,
Consuming it.
Consumed by desolation.
Consuming it.
Consumed by mystery,

Consuming it.
Consumed by terror,
Consuming it.
Consumed by sickness,
Consuming it.
Consumed by gratitude,
Consuming it.

Giving and consuming all.
Nothing is excluded.
There is no remainder,
As the wisdom flames
Dance madly in the empty sky.

Kukkuripa then sang this song:

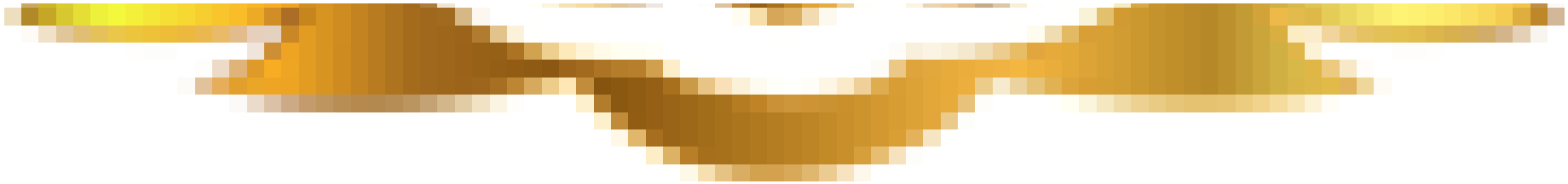
“Married to one whose mind is the sky,
My abandonment within phenomena cannot be described.

“Abandoned, I see the source and origin.
O Mother, the child I see here cannot, in truth, be seen.

“From my first childbirth came a son,
His being made from sensations, memory, emotional tendencies.
Cutting the umbilical cord,
He too is abandoned.

“Cut down to the root,
My birth and youth are fulfilled.”

Kukkuripa says: “This is firm.
Whoever understands this is a hero.”



Moving as the directionless wind of great compassion
Through the infinite open expanse of pure illusion,
Appearing in a galaxy forms,
Appearing in an infinite expanse of realms and places,
Appearing in words and outside of words,

The Mahasiddha Kukkuripa
Is said to have dwelt in Lumbini and Kapilavastu.
He is said to have brought back many tantras from the Dakini realm.

He is said to have liberated innumerable beings.
Padmavajra who taught Telo who taught Naro
Is said to be his student.

Sent by Naropa, Marpa of Lhodrak met him
And received the Mahamaya and its three yogas from him.
At that time, Mahasiddha Kukkuripa lived in the south
On a mountain island in the center of a boiling poison lake.

He appeared there as a dark human form, the color of a rotten corpse.
His body was covered with hair and his face was like a monkey's.
Marpa found him lying still beneath a tamarind tree,
Covered with bird feathers, his face hidden in the crook of his

arm.
A black female dog slept next to him.

Now, this great lord dwells in the sky of the Dakini realm,
Where he is the unwaning moon and ever-rising sun.
His indestructible three gates
Are passport and entry into all pure realms.

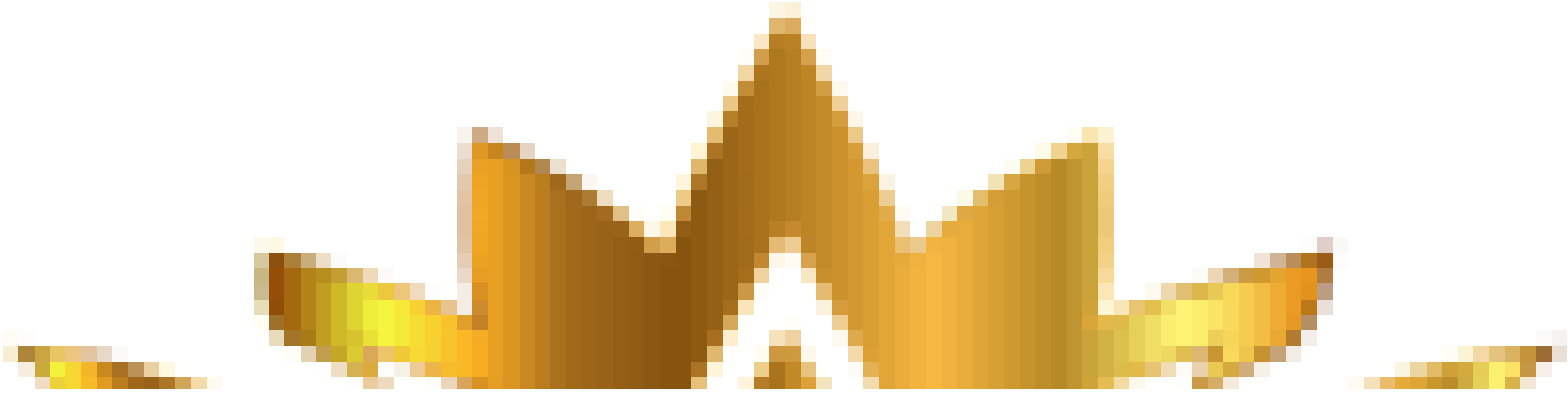
Awake, completely free, alive, sudden and direct
He is Buddha Amitaeus, Boundless Life.
His signless mind is living reality itself.

Blazing with passion, stirring every movement of the mind,
He is Buddha Amitabha, Boundless Light.
His voice is the brilliance of love and source of all clarity.

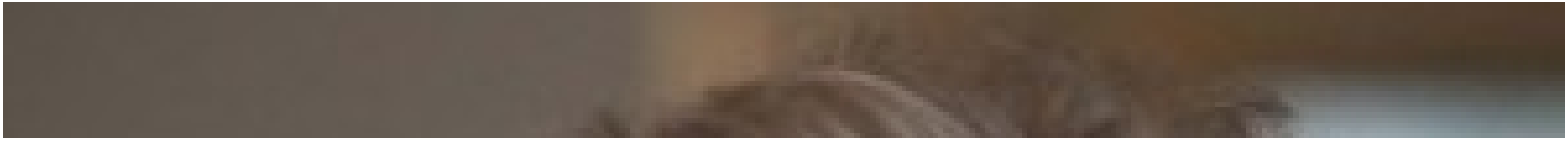
Reaching out in all phenomena considered as other,
He is Avalokiteshvara, ever responding to all suffering.
His body is the ever-present world of the senses.

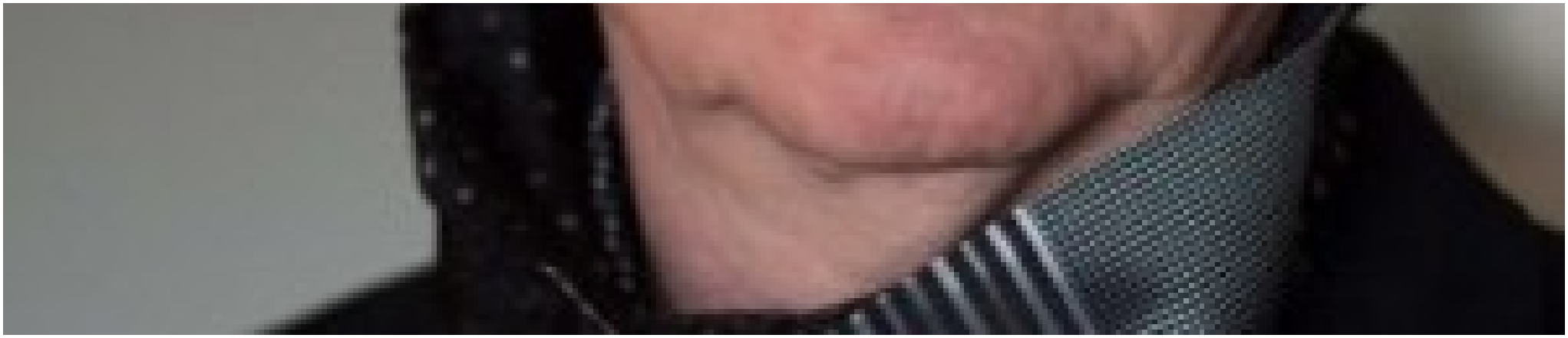
Free in all the illusory dimensions of space and time,
Savoring everything,
He is self-born Great Compassion, running wild.

MAHA KARUNA MAHA SUKHA SUDDHA SARVA SVAHA



About the Author





Douglas J. Penick

Douglas Penick utilizes historical research with a solid understanding of Chinese culture and Buddhism to make stories accessible, beautiful and enlightening. In his words, "I contribute to the mischief, longing, satisfaction, lust, sorrow and fascination which make our presence in this world a discovery of true love." The Website of Douglas. Other LEVEKUNST articles by the same author.

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